

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-10 NSC-07 NSCE-00 L-02 SCA-01

SCS-01 SAM-01 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01

DRC-01 /061 W

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P R 201117Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0291

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3538

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, VT, CU, PO

SUBJ: PROPOSED PERALTA-LUNT EXCHANGE

REF: (A) STATE 170206; (B) STATE 181631

1. IN RECENT CONTACT WITH GENERAL GALVAO DE MELO, HE INDICATED THAT MATTER REMAINS AS BEFORE, THAT IS, CUBANS ARE ADAMANT AGAINST RELEASE OF LUNT IN EXCHANGE FOR PERALTA, AND GOP IS DETERMINED NOT TO RELEASE PERALTA. HE INDICATED THAT, ASIDE FROM CUBAN REFUSAL TO RELEASE LUNT, THERE ARE STRONG PRESSURES WITHIN PORTUGUESE MILITARY CIRCLES AGAINST RELEASE OF PERALTA UNTIL HIS PRISON TERM EXPIRES. HE THEREFORE LEFT IMPRESSION THAT PERALTA WILL NOT BE RELEASED BUT THAT HIS CONTINUED DETENTION NOW NOT NECESSARILY CONNECTED WITH LUNT.

2. CHARGE RAISED SUBJECT AUGUST 19 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER SOARES. LATTER CONVEYED VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL IMPRESSION, ADDING THAT LUNT-PERALTA EXCHANGE COULD HAVE BEEN ARRANGED QUIETLY BY PREVIOUS "FASCIST" REGIME BUT WITH PRESENT PRESS FREEDOM A STORM OF
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PROTEST COULD NOT BE AVOIDED. WHILE HE HAD NOT

SPOKEN ON THIS SUBJECT RECENTLY WITH CUBAN CHARGE, ON LAST OCCASION CUBAN CHARGE HAD INDICATED THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD CUBA RELEASE LUNT IN EXCHANGE FOR PERALTA. IN RECENT WEEKS, SOARES HAD TAKEN NOTE OF FACT THAT CUBAN HAD BEEN MAKING VISITS TO VARIOUS OFFICERS IN ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (MFA) AND HAD THEREFORE "GONE OVER MY HEAD". HOWEVER, SOARES HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT CUBAN HAD MADE NO PROGRESS SINCE, WHILE CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS IN MFA FELT THAT PERALTA SHOULD HAVE BEEN RELEASED IMMEDIATELY AFTER COUP (A VIEWPOINT WHICH SOARES APPEARED PERSONALLY TO AGREE WITH), THERE WERE NONETHELESS POWERFUL ELEMENTS IN THE ARMED FORCES WHO WERE ADAMANT AGAINST HIS RELEASE FOR ANY REASON.

3. SOARES INDICATED THAT, IF U.S. WISHED, HE WOULD TAKE MATTER UP AGAIN WITH CUBAN CHARGE, BUT HE WONDERED WHAT ARGUMENT HE COULD USE. CHARGE SUGGESTED THAT HE COULD NOTE THAT CUBA HAD IN EFFECT UNDERTAKEN INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION WHEN IT PROPOSED TO VATICAN THAT IT WOULD RELEASE LUNT IN EXCHANGE FOR PERALTA AND GOP COULD URGE CUBATO LIVE UP TO ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS. SOARES AGREED THAT HE WOULD TAKE THIS LINE IF U.S. WISHED BUT DOUBTED THAT IT WOULD SWAY CUBANS.

4. COMMENT: IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL THAT RENEWED INITIATIVE BY SOARES WOULD ADVANCE CASE. BEFORE PROCEEDING FURTHER IN LISBON TO REVIVE IDEA OF PERALTA-LUNT EXCHANGE, SEEMS TO US THAT ACTION SHOULD SHIFT TO HAVANA TO SEEK TO OVERCOME CUBAN OBSTINANCY. UNLESS CUBA PREPARED PROCEED WITH EXCHANGE, WE UNLIKELY ADVANCE MATTERS BY PUTTING RENEWED PRESSURES ON PORTUGUESE AND RISKING SOME RESENTMENT ON THEIR PART.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LISBON03538
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740229-0033
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740834/aaaabcpt.tel
Line Count: 96
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: (A) STATE 170206; (B) STATE 181631
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 APR 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <26 JUN 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROPOSED PERALTA-LUNT EXCHANGE
TAGS: CASC, VT, CU, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005